False news in UK’s Daily Mail: the latest in misinformation

A news report in a British tabloid claiming torture of a child by a Tatmataw soldier using a stun gun has been debunked, but is only the latest example of inaccurate coverage that has hurt the country’s image, according to the State Counsellor’s Information Committee.

The news article written by David Burke containing photos and video in Wednesday’s online version of the UK’s Daily Mail allegedly showed a “Rohingya toddler tortured with a stun gun by a laughing Burmese soldier as Burma continues crackdown on the country’s Muslim minority” that quickly circulated on social media.

The story was taken down from the Daily Mail’s website soon after it was found to be inaccurate, but archived versions of the article continue to circulate on Twitter, Facebook and other social media.

The Information Committee of the State Counsellor’s Office noted that even though the story was deleted from the newspaper’s website, no apology, explanation or clarification was given concerning the accuracy of the report or the damage it has caused.

“The Daily Mail deleted the news without taking responsibility and without making a news correction for wrongly describing the incident”, according to the Information Committee’s statement. “Description of this false news, which did not actually occur in Myanmar, made misunderstanding of the country only increase.”

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and presidential spokesperson U Zaw Htay have consistently stated that inaccurate, manufactured news that is being fed to international news organisations is being disseminated without appropriate vetting.

“Invented news with false photos and video recordings from other places are being spread among the people” according to the State Counsellor’s Information Committee.

“Recently, BBC, CNN, CNA and Al Jazeera described the false news based on unreasonable statements made by John McKissick, one of the UNHCR based in Cox’s Bazaar, Bangladesh” according to a release from the Information Committee.

The Information Committee said an appropriate response to the false Daily Mail report will be forthcoming.—Myanmar News Agency

Investigation Commission invites those in affected communities to give factual information

Investigation Commission has been formed to probe into the violent attacks in Rakhine.

Following the full text of the press release.

Following the formation of Investigation Commission by the notification 89/2016 of the President Office on 1 December 2016, headed by the Vice President 1 U Myint Swe as its chair.

The Commission is mindful of the heavy burden of responsibility placed on its members and the right timeframe to undertake its responsibility including the causes of the attacks, deaths, injuries, destruction and other damages; documentation of measures taken to establish stability and rule of law; verification of allegations during the clearance operations; status of guarantee for security and human rights of the people and the situation humanitarian aid as well as provide recommendations for conflict prevention and measures to avoid similar incidents in the future.

See page 3 >>
Pyithu Hluttaw debate agricultural loans and public security

EXTENDING agricultural loans through a door-to-door system and public security were discussed at the Pyithu Hluttaw session yesterday.

As agricultural loans have increased from Ks2 billion in 1994-94 fiscal year to Ks1,700 billion this year, it is impossible to grant the loans through a door-to-door system, Union Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation Dr Aung Thu told the session.

Another difficulty pointed out by the union minister was the cost for transportation of a very large sum of cash and security arrangements for the cash as well as for staff members.

In addition, the banks extending the agricultural loans do not have enough staff to provide the service, according to the union minister.

The union minister was responding to the motion urging the union government to grant agricultural loans through the door-to-door system.

Some representatives also pointed out some of the difficulties the union minister mentioned while others debated in support of the motion.

The Pyithu Hluttaw session put the motion on record.

Concerning public security, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Soe said that the police are taking measures to reduce the number of crimes in cooperation with ward/village administrators, partnership organisations, elders and youths while laws are being amended to take effective actions against offenders. —Myanmar News Agency

More households in Rakhine to be supplied with electricity

OVER 31,000 households in the towns of Minbya, Pauktaw, Kandawgyi, Kyaukpyu and Tuattaung in Rakhine State will be supplied with electricity starting from early 2017. Deputy Minister for Electric Power and Energy Dr Tun Naing told the Amyotha Hluttaw session yesterday.

In response to the question raised by another representative, the deputy minister said that land for an oil and gas pipeline was confiscated as part of a project of the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, with land ownerships transferred to the MOGE. As a result, it is unnecessary to make a new agreement with the foreign ministry in question, according to the deputy minister.

The deputy minister was responding to a question whether the union government has plans to make a new agreement for Kyaukpyu-Kumming Oil and Gas Pipeline, as a foreign company bought most of farmland from farmers directly, which breached the law.

The deputy minister denied that the foreign company bought the land directly from the farmers and said ownership of farmland had already been transferred to MOGE. —Myanmar News Agency

Union Minister for Information talks about media freedom

A WORKSHOP on the promotion of media freedom was held at the Ministry of Information yesterday, with the opening address by Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint.

In his speech, the union minister said that the Ministry of Information is implementing reforms for the democratic transition and contributing to its success as the ministry appreciates its duty for freedom of expression, which is the essence of democracy.

In addition, the union minister said that the focus is placed on freedom in drafting laws for, the media and publishing, but existing laws cannot meet the international standard as it is difficult to move too far from the current situation, the union minister said.

It is thus necessary to carry out institutional reform properly so that the transition can be smooth while compatible changes are required in the practical field, according to the union minister.

In conclusion, he pointed out that it is vital to amend laws in such a way that they are practical and make efforts for freedom.

Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Soe.

NRCs, border passes seized in Shan State clearance operation

Government troops conducting a security patrol near the village of Namkoot in Mongko Township, Shan State were attacked with gunfire and artillery Monday evening by a combined force of the KIA and the TNLA. Tatmataw troops returned fire, causing the KIA/TNLA group to retreat to the south.

There were no fatalities, but some military officers and rank-and-file were injured, according to the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.

According to the news release of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, the documents are evidence that the attackers were members of a KIA armed group from the region of Karmai and Tanai in Kachin State, holding border passes in order to trespass for armed attacks. —Myanmar News Agency

Traffic fatalities on the rise in Taungoo

NEARLY 120 people died in 865 traffic accidents in Taungoo District over the past 11 months, while over 650 individuals sustained injuries, according to the district traffic police. Although non-fatal injuries decreased by over 130 compared with last year, traffic fatalities rate far exceeded last year’s total of 92.

In 2015, a total of 428 road accidents occurred in six townships in Taungoo District, leaving 92 people dead and 785 others injured.

The high death toll in road accidents is the result of failure by drivers and pedestrians to abide by traffic safety rules and regulations, a police officer said.

To reduce road-related deaths, traffic rule enforcement efforts have been made throughout the district, with the result that the number of traffic rule violators has significantly decreased since September, when the project was started to implement, police said.

—Kyi Thar

Border passes passes found during the area clearance operation in Mongko.

PHOTO: INFORMATION TEAM OF THE STATE COUNSELOR’S OFFICE
Vice President to Rakhine commission: The world is waiting

VICE President U Myint Swe yesterday said the goal of the Rakhine State investigation commission should focus on seven key areas and be diligent and swift in their mission because of the international scrutiny being focused on Myanmar.

“The Office of the President of the State laid down 7 key points to be reported — the background situation of armed attacks in Maungtaw region, casualties and losses in armed attacks, arrangements for peace and stability of the area and rule of law, investigations as to whether accusations over the area clearance operations are right or wrong, ensuring the safety and basic rights of the populace, prevention of conflicts, providing humanitarian aid and plans so that similar incidents will not happen again,” the Vice President said at the first meeting of the Investigation Commission on Rakhine State held yesterday morning in the meeting hall of the Office of the Union Government in Nay Pyi Taw.

Present at the meeting were the Vice President, who is the chairman of the Investigation on Rakhine State, and members U Aung Kyi, U Tun Myat, Dr Thet Thet Zin, Dr Aung Tun Thet, U Nyunt Swe, U Saw Thalyaw Sao, U Aung Naing, Dr Hla Maung, U Tha Nyan, Secretary U Zaw Myint Pe and responsible officials.

“This is the first meeting of the commission formed under the notification of the Office of the President of the State on December 1, 2016. Our commission is required to enquire into the background situations over the attack of October 9 and attacks on November 12 & 13 in Maungtaw region, Rakhine State, arrangements for prevention of further incidents, submitting to the President of the State reports on suggestions after investigating whether the process of dealing with these armed attacks were managed in accord with the nation’s existing laws and regulations not later than 31 January 2017.”

The investigation will require on-site inquiries, the Vice President said.

“The commission is to go to the places at which incidents occurred for investigating on-the-ground situations — three incidents on October 9, 12 incidents from October 10 to November 9, three incidents on November 12 and two incidents on November 13 to compile a detailed report, hence the need to go the places in Buthitawng and Maungtaw region as soon as possible”, the Vice President said.

U Myint Swe defended the ongoing clearance operations that have been conducted since 9 October.

“Tatmataw-Myanmar Police Force combined troops made a series of area clearance operations, with a view to investigating those involved in armed attacks and recapturing looted arms and ammunition, confronting frequent attacks. Starting from October 9 till now, 7 soldiers and 10 policemen were killed with 3 soldiers, 7 policemen and one civilian injured, and 2 firearms of the Tatmataw and 39 units from the police force lost.”

The actions, recommendations and findings of the commission are especially important because of worldwide attention being given to events in Rakhine State.

“International organizations and the public are watching the incidents that occurred in Buthitawng and Maungtaw region, Rakhine State, with great interest. Therefore, the commission needs to make a prompt response so that it can reduce their worries.”

Forward, U Zaw Myint Pe, secretary of the commission clarified the assignment of duty to the commission and the process of activities to be performed further.

On behalf of Myanmar Police Force Cief Police, Brigadier-General Myo Swe Win explained in detail about the background situation of the armed attacks in Maungtaw region and cause of the incidents.

Then commission members discussed based on their respective experiences. —Myanmar News Agency

Myanmar drug policies consultations conclude

THE third and final round of drug policy consultations convened by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Myanmar Police Force (MPF) Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), concluded this week in Nay Pyi Taw, laying the foundation for a new drug policy and related legal reforms in 2017.

The final session closes a process which began with high-level meetings between a Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (the Myanmar Parliament) committee, the Ministry of Home Affairs, MPF and the UNODC Regional Representative and Country Manager in late June, followed by rounds of consultation with staff and experts from government ministries, agencies and civil society in October, November and December.

The drug challenges facing Myanmar are significant, including areas of opium poppy cultivation and heroin production, increasing methamphetamine production and trafficking, cross-border precursor chemical trafficking, and increasing drug use and associated harms. Given the situation, the three rounds focused heavily on reviewing and considering data, what has been done or not done, and what is needed. To ensure relevance and so that no aspects would be missed, CCDAC structured the sessions to follow themes of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS) of April this year, including law enforcement and justice, supply reduction and alternative development, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, and cross cutting issues including human rights. Discussions also emphasised regional cooperation to respond to the transnational nature of the drug problem and associated organised crime — Myanmar is a key player in the Mekong MOU on Drug Control which facilitates cooperation and collaboration between countries of the region.

During the closing, Brigadier General Kyaw Win, Commander of the Drug Enforcement Division and Joint Secretary of CCDAC, called on stakeholders to consider drug control part of the larger development discourse of the country. “The drug problem requires all parts of the Government of Myanmar, civil society and our partners UNODC to work together,” he said. —UNODC

State Counsellor receives BIMSTEC S-G

DAW Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, received Mr Sumith Narkandala, Secretary-General of BIMSTEC, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, they discussed matters related to the cooperation between Myanmar and BIMSTEC and future cooperation of BIMSTEC. —State Counsellor

Vice President U Myint Swe addresses the first meeting of the Investigation Commission on Rakhine State. PHOTO: MNA

Investigation Commission invites those in affected communities . . .

>>From page 1

Commission members are committed to conducting its work in an open and transparent manner and in accordance with national and international norms. The Commission looks forward to collaborating with relevant national and local actors and individuals including affected communities to uncover factual information that will contribute to designing measures to avoid incidents and conflict in the future. In this regards, the Commission will spare no effort in undertaking its responsibility. —Investigation Commission

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets Mr Sumith Narkandala, Secretary-General of (BIMSTEC). PHOTO: MNA

Turkish Ambassador calls on State Counsellor

MR Kerem Divanhoglu, who has been appointed as Ambassador of Turkey to Myanmar, called on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, at 11 am on 8th December 2016 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw. —Myanmar News Agency

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi holds talks with Turkish Ambassador Mr Kerem Divanhoglu. PHOTO: MNA

State Counsellor receives BIMSTEC S-G
A city taxi is being hired by passengers in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHAR

KBZ named Bank of the Year in Myanmar for four consecutive years

KANBAWZA Bank (KBZ) has been named Bank of the Year in Myanmar 2016, a title it has held for four consecutive years.

Bank Chairman U Aung Ko Win accepted the award at the Banker Awards 2016 ceremony held at the Hilton London Bankside Hotel in London on 7th December. The title is bestowed annually by the Financial Times, the well-known business journal based in London.

For the best banking services were won by banks from 149 countries including Bank of America in the United States, China Merchant Bank in China, Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group in Japan, Lloyds Banking Group in England, DBS Bank in Singapore and Bangkok Bank in Thailand.

The ING Group in the Netherlands was crowned Global Bank of the Year 2016 at the ceremony. The Financial Times awards the prizes based on set criteria against which data concerning banking services collected by reporters and the media are measured.

This year’s award comes at the time when the Financial Times, which was founded in 1926, celebrates its 90th birthday.

KBZ Bank was chosen as the winner for its important role in improvement of the economy of Myanmar, being the most reliable bank for the people in Myanmar, achievements in improvement of ATM machines and bank system efficiency, the establishment of ATMs machines and bank branches nationwide, owning a large share of the market, making a large number of loans to businesses, showing higher income and profits, the improvement of the calibre of its staff, the use of technology, connectivity with other international banks and being number one on the country’s tax-paying list for four years consecutively and taking a leading role in philanthropic works in the country.

KBZ Bank was also crowned with the title of “Best Bank in Myanmar” by the London-based publication Euromoney on 14th July, 2016, “Best Bank in Myanmar” by Finance Asia on 1st September and “World Quality Commitment” by Spain-based Business Initiative Directions in 2016. —Thitha Tun

RFID to be installed in licensed taxis

THE Yangon regional government ministry in charge of transportation will install an RFID (Radio Frequency Identification Device) system in licensed taxis so that authorities can take action against unlicensed taxis that are operating in the Yangon region, it is learnt.

“There are a total of more than 80,000 vehicles running in Yangon, some with a permanent license, some with a temporary taxi license and the rest without any license. We will install the RFID in the licensed taxis so that we can easily to take action against unlicensed taxi drivers,” said Daw Nilar Kyaw, the regional minister for electricity, industry and transportation on Tuesday at the 2nd Yangon Region Hluttaw third regular session.

Regional Hluttaw Kyauktada township Constituency 2 representative Daw Mya Hla San tabled a motion to discuss traffic congestion problem in Yangon region.

Traffic jams occur in Yangon region because stands have not been properly installed in the Yangon region. This forces taxi drivers looking for the passengers to stop on the road, blocking other cars. The authorities must be strict with the taxi drivers, to be able to solve those problems.

About 50 per cent of the vehicles that are towed are not demanded back because most of the vehicles are unlicensed, it is learnt from the ministry of electricity, industry and transportation.

Modern Traffic Control Centers, CCTV’s and traffic lights are being installed around the city of Yangon to help control the traffic problems. —Myitmakha News Agency

Stimulant tablets, ICE seized in northern Shan State

LOCAL security forces searched a vehicle driven by Yan Chon Kyone, 32, with Kwan Mai, 35, on board at Lashio-Mai Yaw Road yesterday and discovered large quantities of cash and illegal drugs.

Police seized methamphetamine (ICE) weighing 33 kilograms, ephedrine powder weighing 5 kilograms and 1,06 kg, according to the Information Committee of the State Counsellor’s Office.

Similarly, a special task force searched a farm but at a rubber plantation near Shin Lon Kyayang village in Kunlon Township on Thursday.

A car trying to avoid a motorbike instead hit a palm tree yesterday on Hinthada-Inbin-Myan Aung Highway, Hinthada district, Ayeyawady region, at which point the driver of the car boarded a bus and fled.

“Currently, we are looking for the driver who fled from the scene. We will proceed according to the law,” said sub-inspector of police Aung Kyaw of the Myan Aung police station.

The accident occurred near Ohn Gon village, beyond mile-post 55/5.

“The car was heading from Inbin to Myan Aung township. The road is too narrow, forcing the drivers to drive very carefully. The car was trying to avoid a motorbike, then it hit the palm tree. The driver was not injured. He got onto a passenger bus to fly in the direction of Hoo Gyi,” said a villager from Ohn Gon. The police are still investigating the case and are searching the driver who fled the scene. —Myitmakha News Agency

Accident kills three on Hinthada-Myan Aung Road

A motorbike with four people on board collided head-on with a passenger bus on Hinthada district, Ayeyawady Region on Wednesday, leaving three dead.

The passenger bus driven by Tun Tun with a conductor on board was en route to Paya from Hinthada when it crashed into the motorbike between mileposts 56/5 and 56/6 near Jin Kar Gone Village, Myan Aung Township.

Three people aboard the motorbike died at the scene. The fourth person who had been on the motorbike, Lin Lin Tun, was seriously injured in the accident. He is receiving medical treatment at Myan Aung General Hospital.

The police have opened an investigation into the matter and plan to take action against the careless driver. —Myitmakha News Agency

Crime

K 900 million worth WY tablets seized in Maungtaw

SECURITY forces arrested five men and seized stimulant tablets from a boat at the south of Kyin Nyin Creek, eastern Maung Ni village, Maungtaw yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, security forces on patrol with military vessels inspected a boat crossing to Bangladesh and arrested five men: Nu Mmaid, 18, son of Nu Kar Mar living at Shwe Zar middle village; Har Bar Lu Raw Harman, 18, son of Adu Halik, Awli Mati, 19, son of Raw Shi Tar Maik; Arhat, 19, son of Shar Ah Laung living at Shwe Zar west village and Mamad Sultan, 35, son of Zaw Lar Maik, together with 446,500 stimulant tablets stamped with the WY/88/1 logo. —Myanmar News Agency

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A motorbike with four people on board collided head-on with a passenger bus on Hinthada-Myan Aung Road in Hinthada district, Ayeyawady region Wednesday, leaving three dead. —Myanmar News Agency

Five men with stimulant tablets pose for a photo in Maungtaw. PHOTO: INFORMATION COMMITTEE OF THE STATE COUNSELLOR’S OFFICE

TK 900 million worth WY tablets seized in Maungtaw

Security forces arrested five men and seized stimulant tablets from a boat at the southern part of Kyin Nyin Creek, eastern Maung Ni village, Maungtaw yesterday. Acting on a tip-off, security forces on patrol with military vessels inspected a boat crossing to Bangladesh and arrested five men: Nu Mmaid, 18, son of Nu Kar Mar living at Shwe Zar middle village; Har Bar Lu Raw Harman, 18, son of Adu Halik, Awli Mati, 19, son of Raw Shi Tar Maik; Arhat, 19, son of Shar Ah Laung living at Shwe Zar west village and Mamad Sultan, 35, son of Zaw Lar Maik, together with 446,500 stimulant tablets stamped with the WY/88/1 logo. —Myanmar News Agency
Another Myanmar bank begins issuing debit card from Japan’s JCB

A second major Myanmar bank has begun offering a debit card in conjunction with Japanese lender JCB following the first issuance earlier this year.

Co-operative Bank, widely known as CB Bank, began issuing the CB MPU-JCB Co-Brand Card on 1 December. It combines the JCB brand of JCB International Co. and the MPU brand of Myanmar Payment Union Public Co., which operates a national banking network connected with 23 local banks.

A ceremony launching the JCB debit card was held at CB Bank’s headquarters on 30 November in Yangon, Myanmar’s commercial capital.

The card comes in platinum, gold and standard types, allowing all cardholders to access JCB services including staffed counters around the world.

In addition, platinum and gold cardholders will receive cash back and discounts at CB Bank’s member merchants. For platinum card owners, JCB also offers exclusive services, including airport lounge, concierge desk and special hotel services.

Cardholders can use over 1,490 automated teller machines and about 3,000 point-of-sale machines in Myanmar, as well as JCB’s global network with 31 million merchants in 190 countries and territories.—Kyodo News

FOREIGN direct investment (FDI) as of the end of November in the current fiscal year slumped by nearly US$650 million when compared to the similar period last year, according to statistics released recently by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

In the same period, FDI of US$3,943.184 million entered Myanmar in the 2015-2016 fiscal year, with investment in 129 projects. Foreign investments of US$3,293.616 million flowed into 71 enterprises in Myanmar as of the end of November this fiscal year, with FDI of US$1,615.892 million in the Transport and Communication sector, US$786.215 million in the manufacturing sector, US$805.672 million in the power sector, US$105.000 million in the real estate sector, US$97.276 million in the hotels and tourism sector, US$86.688 million in the livestock and fisheries sector and US$54.923 million in other services, according to the statistics of DICA.

Myanmar Citizen Investments as of the end of November in this fiscal year amounted to Ks12,357,648.566 million with a total of 1,222 projects. The Myanmar Citizens investments consisted of Ks24,104,754.800 million in manufacturing, Ks22,355,982.420 million in transport, Ks12,148,031.780 million in real estate development, Ks1,350,030.957 million in hotels and tourism, Ks942,991.690 million in construction, Ks575,305.800 million in industrial estate, Ks456,681.422 million in power, Ks3,803,711.411 million in mining, Ks66,764.104 million in livestock and fisheries, Ks30,713.390 million in agriculture and Ks1,982,633.434 million in other sector, according to DICA.

The Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) reviews investment proposals on the basis of the opinions and assessments of relevant regional and state governments to check whether the proposal meets the criteria before approval is granted.—Ko Khant

Mogok precious stone brokers faced with scarcity of raw stones and high price

GEM stone brokers from Mogok are being faced with a scarcity of raw gemstones and high prices because the permitted companies engaged in precious stone mining in Mogok do not auction off the stones in external markets, said the stone brokers.

The companies are taking all of the gem stones dug by machinery and these precious raw stones are not put up for auction in Mogok, resulting in a scarcity of raw materials in Mogok, said a merchant dealing in gems and jewellery.

The scarcity of raw gemstones in the outside market results in exorbitantly high prices, making it difficult for locals to earn a living. If the companies made an auction of stones, they could help the locals to do better financially, said the stone brokers.

High-quality raw gem materials as well as wild gemstone materials are rare in the market. The price of wild stone materials has risen from Ks50,000 to Ks10 million even, said U Kyaw Zaw from the stone brokers’ group.—Aung Than Khaing

Individual car importers can seek permit under old policy by 23rd December

THOSE who want to individually import the cars under the old policy can apply by 23rd December, according to an announcement released by the supervisory committee for motor vehicles.

The car importers have to seek a permit under the new policy starting from 2017. There is no deadline announcement relating to the cars imported with a slip issued after de-registration of old vehicles, although the deadline for car importers who wish to seek a permit under the old policy has been announced. Those who fail to apply for an import permit by 23rd December will be denied. They can reapply for a permit only after 1st January. The committee has already imposed the model-year limits for imported cars in 2017. Currently, the change in policy resulted in an increase in the car price. However, there is not much demand in the auto market. The price for 2011 model cars with 1300 CC engines is higher than the previous price, said car brokers.—200

POSOCO Dawoo Corporation (PDC) Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for Future Development of the Shwe Project

POSOCO Dawoo Corporation (PDC) is planning on commencing the next Phase of development of the Shwe Gas Field Project. This will include installation of a platform, subsea facilities, pipelines and production drillings. The Shwe Field is located in Block A-1 and A-3, offshore Rakhine State, 70 km from Sitwe and 105 km from Kyaukphyu.

Under the Environmental Conservation Law and Environmental Conservation Rules of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, PDC is required to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed activity. The EIA Study has commenced and is being conducted by Environmental Resources Management (ERM) and Resource and Environment Myanmar (REM), on behalf of PDC, in accordance with the Myanmar EIA Procedure (2015). Associated stakeholder engagement has been undertaken at the national and local levels in Naypyidaw, Sitwe and Kyaukphyu. Further engagement as part of the EIA Study will be conducted in Rakhine State in January 2017.

A copy of the Scoping Report can be found on PDC’s webpage www.dawoo.com. Any queries, comments or suggestions on the Project and the EIA Study can be provided in writing to urker@posco-dawooemp.com.
Nearly 300 schools reopened in Maungtaw district

According to U Ohn Myint, head of Maungtaw district education department, all government basic education schools have been reopened following outbreaks of armed attacks in Maungtaw district.

He said, “Starting from October 21, schools were opened gradually in the area which gained peace and stability in Maungtaw district. Now all schools in Buthaung in Maungtaw district have been reopened.”

That there were 10 State High Schools, 106 State Middle Schools and 103 State Primary Schools in Maungtaw District and all had been reopened.

Similarly, there were 9 State High Schools, 29 State Middle Schools and 32 State Primary Schools—70 in all—opened, it is learnt. Yet, according to the office of Maungtaw District Education Department, 7 SHSs, 79 SMs and 113 SPs are still left to reopen.

U Ohn Myint added, “Out of schools that remain to open, 50 or so are to be reopened this week with the rest 50 left are to gradually reopen depending on peace and stability of the area.

Teachers have been assembled at a place.

Schools left to reopen are in villages of northern Maungtaw and more schools are to be opened as soon as the area gains peace and stability. Presently, nearly 300 schools have been reopened in the whole district out of 402 schools.

Two Bangladeshis arrested in Maungtaw

Security forces detained two migrants from Bangladesh found in a boat on Wednesday, according to the Information Committee of the State Counsellor’s Office.

While patrolling by watercraft, security forces found the two illegal migrants, Adu Shukan, 43, and Buli Myar, 42, from Teknaf, Bangladesh, in a boat in the middle of the night. They will be charged in accordance with rules and regulations, said the press release of the committee.

— Myanmar News Agency

Arms and ammunition seized in area clearance operations around Mongko

SECURITY forces defused nine improvised bombs in a conduit near Nangpachi Village in Kutkai yesterday, according to the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.

Acting on tips, security forces defused the pipeline under the union highway near Nangpachi Village and discovered 9 improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

The IEDs were made of iron containers, 6-inch in height and 4-inch in diameter and they were found together with one 14.8 volt battery, nine detonators and one circuit-board for remote control. The security force defused all IEDs.

— Myanmar News Agency

Five arrested for accepting cash for Maungtaw unrest

SECURITY forces arrested Imran Nsaung in Maungtaw yesterday on suspicion of receiving and transferring cash assistance from abroad to violent attackers, according to the Information Committee of the State Counsellor’s Office.

The arrest came following the interrogation of four other men who were arrested on Tuesday on suspicion of being involved in provoking unrest in Maungtaw, Rakhine State.

The security forces, acting on a tip-off that some people accepted money from abroad in return for fomenting discontent in their villages in Maungtaw Township, inspected Thawunchaung (North) Village and Chankhuri Village at about 5:30 pm on Tuesday and arrested four suspects together with Ks3 million.

Action will be taken against the five in accordance with the law.

— Myanmar News Agency

More bodies of police found in Mongko

According to the news released by the State Counsellor Office’s Information Committee, the government troops found 3 corpses of police who died of gun wounds near the bushes between the school and police station at 9 am or so on Thursday during the thorough area clearance operation in Mongko area.

Out of 16 missing in action in series of Mongko attacks, northern Shan State, four were found alive; 9 killed and three missing.

— Myanmar News Agency

KIA armed group forces to recruit two men

The State Counsellor Office’s Information Committee released the news that KIA armed group conscripted two men residing in the town of Anjanyan in Kachin State on their way to their terraced farming at 8:30 am on December 7.

— Myanmar News Agency

Impromptu bombs found in Kutkai

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— Myanmar News Agency
Search resumes after Indonesian quake as death toll passes 100

BANGKOK — Thailand on Thursday said peace talks with Muslim separatists in Malaysia would resume in November after a round of September peace talks ended without progress.

Separatists waging a decades-old insurgency in the Muslim-majority southern Thai provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat have stepped up attacks since 2004 with more than 7,000 people killed, according to an independent monitoring group. A peace effort begun in 2013 under a civilian government and was picked up again by a military government set up after a 2014 coup.

Talks 2 September between the Thai government and separatists in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, ended with no breakthrough. Mostly Muslim Malaysia has been trying to nudge the process forward.

“Next week a small team will travel to Malaysia to talk to groups who have different opinions in order to discuss ‘safety zones,’” General Aksara Kerdpol, the Thai government’s lead negotiator, told Reuters.

“Our goals is to minimize losses and violence. Talks right now are at the trust-building stage and these safety zones are one way of building this trust,” he said. The safety zones would be an area where insurgent-related fighting is off-limits, according to the Thai military, but details about the zones have not been made clear.

Six people were shot dead on Wednesday and Thursday in predominantly Buddhist Thailand’s far south, though four of the deaths were thought to have been linked to personal disputes, the Thai military’s Internal Security Operations Command said.

A string of bombings killed four Thais and wounded dozens of people, including foreigners, in tourist towns in August, raising fears that insurgent violence was spilling out of the far south. No group claimed the bombings and the government gave mixed signals as to whether the Muslim rebels were believed to have been responsible, though police did link the coordinated attacks to the insurgents.

The government of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra responded to the flare up in southern violence in 2004 with force and imposed emergency laws that gave broad powers to security forces.

Muslims in the far south complain of decades of neglect by the Bangkok-based establishment and bureaucracy.
**Opinion**

Religion should not become a stepping stone

Kyaw Myaing

**Myanmar** is a country where all citizens have been given the freedom to profess and practice religion. Moreover, it is a country where the exploitation of religion for political affairs is prohibited. Also, the use of race and religion to cause hatred, enmity, and disunity among different groups and people on different sides of an argument is prohibited. In Myanmar, right from the time of the ancient Myanmar kings, there has been absolutely no discrimination based on beliefs or religion. It is perfectly clear that with the different religious beliefs professed by their citizens, the kings had given their encouragement and had made donations accordingly.

As the whole world is focusing their attention on and monitoring what is happening in Myanmar, it is the first time in Northern Rakhine state, rumours and false news have been circulating and as a result, based on such facts, certain organizations and individuals have been blaming and criticizing Myanmar without any careful reasoning process. Especially in the events in Rakhine state, the violent attackers and civilian organizations supporting them from behind have tried to disguise and portray them in such a way that the whole world would view these incidents as religious discrimination and persecution. On the other hand, they have portrayed these events as “genocide” by magnifying the news and gaining the initiative in disseminating incorrect news, so that governments and people of countries with the same religion would blame and criticize Myanmar out of misunderstanding.

Moreover, it is a country where religious and rights and religious freedom have been given. Every Myanmar citizen has a right to freely observe their religious beliefs. By Myanmar citizen, it has been defined as a person born to parents both of whom are ethnic nationals and to those who have become naturalized citizens according to law. Therefore, we wish to say that all acts to use religion to confuse the issue should cease henceforth.

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**The 72nd Myanmar Writers’ Day**

Maha Saddharma Jotika dhaza Sithu, Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt

On the first waxing moon day of Nattaw, Myanmar Era ME 1378, 30 November 2016, the 72nd Myanmar Writers’ Day was fittingly celebrated at 9 a.m. at National Theatre, Yangon by awarding national literary Awards and titles to the deserving writers for the year 2015. It is one of state organized events in which either Head of State, Head of Government or Vice president, Union Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Chief Ministers, political and literary dignitaries, artistic luminaries, diplomats and writers of old and new generations are invited. This year the event was graced by H.E Vice President U Myint Swe.

Here it is necessary and appropriate to give a brief background history of Myanmar Writer’s Day for foreign guests and new generations of Myanmar Writers. Nattaw is the second month in Myanmar Cold Season of four months, 1. Tazaung Mon 2. Nattaw 3. Pyatho and 4. Tabo dwe corresponding to November, December, January and February respectively. Each month has its own traditional monthly festival.

Nattaw’s traditional festival is the Festival of Nat-Spirits. Gansheta [Ma Phine Festival] held on the full moon day of Nattaw. Myanmar Writers’ Day or Sasodaw Festival (စစ္တော) in Nattaw originated in the Period of Japanese Occupation during the Second World War. In the Sakyi period in 1306 (1944) a group of literati headed by Dr. Ba Han assembled in Kun-gyan Kon town to discuss the holding of U Ponnya’s Day. U Ponnya or better known as Saley U Ponnya was a noted playwright of the late Konbaw Period, whose literary talent was likened to that of William Shakespeare. With the unanimous agreement of that group, U Ponnya’s Day was commemorated on the 13th waxing moon Kon of that year. His plays were recited and some were performed on stage by the then outstanding writers. The holding of U Ponnya’s Day was delayed by the military for the emergences of Sasodaw Day and Festival [Writers’ Day and Literary Festival] in the month of Nattaw.

On Monday the Second Waning moon of Kason of that year, the then Minister for Education, Health, and Municipality, H.E U Hla Min convened a meeting at his office to which eminent writers were invited. About eleven literary figures, including Sayaggy U Pe Maung Tin, were present at the meeting. The Minister requested the meeting to choose a day to honour men of letters. Journalist U Chit Maung proposed that as Myanmar Kings used to honour every month in the year of Nattaw men of letters and men of might by conferring titles and giving awards, that good tradition should be maintained by choosing a day in the month of Nattaw and mark it as Sasodaw Nay (စစ္တော) [Writers’ Day]. The Chairman of Writers’ Association Thuriya U Thein Maung seconded that proposal and the meeting agreed. So the 1st Wancing moon of Nattaw was unanimously chosen as the Writers’ Day.

To hold the Writers’ Day for the first time, a leading committee was formed consisting of six members. They were U Tun, U Khin Maung, U Pe Maung Tin, Dr. Ba Han, U Lin, Deedek U Ba Cho and Pahtama Kyaw U Kye Pe. A 15 member Advisory Committee formed included 1. U Tin 2. U Ba Nyunt 3. Myoma Saye Hein 4. U Thein Han (Zawgyi) 5. U E Maung 6. Dr. Hnin Aung 7. U Than Tin 8. U Po Chain.


On the first waxing moon day of the month Nattaw of that year in 1944, the first Myanmar Writers’ Day was observed with due celebration. The then Myanmar Government headed by Adipadi Dr. Ba Maw contributed kyats 10000/ to the Executive Committee for the celebration of Writers’ Day. The event took place in the afternoon at Myaing Theatre at Kandaw Gyi Lake side, Bahan Yangon. Some veteran writers and school master, by turn gave talk on Myanmar literati of historical fame such as Ananta Thuriya, Shin Ma Hta Thathatha, Shin Maha Thalwuntha, Nat Shin Naung, Nawade, Letwde Thondara, U Paw U, Ma Mya Galay, Daw Hnin Hzin Kauk Tin, U Ponnya and Achok Tan Sayay Pe. Some of them recited their poems. At the meeting of writers from Upper and Lower Myanmar, literary topics were discussed and traditional Myanmar refreshments were served with plain green tea. Since then Myanmar Writer’s Day and Festival have been observed without fail.

After Myanmar regained independence, Myanmar Government provided financial support for literary Seminars, discussions and talks at which speakers and audience interact on various aspects of literature.
Tourist arrivals increase in Mandalay this year

Aung Thant Khaing

THE number of tourist arrivals in Mandalay, the last royal capital of Myanmar, over the past ten months reached almost 300,000, an increase of 26 per cent compared with 2014, according to the region hotel and tourism development department.

Between January and October this year, the region received a total of 284,711 international visitors. It hosted 306,432 in 2015 and 242,566 in 2014.

According to the official figures for the year, 40,533 travellers entered the country in January, 39,150 in February, 38,384 in March, 20,262 in April, 21,880 in May, 17,982 in June, 23,748 in July, 26,228 in August, 23,131 in September and 34,207 in October.

Tourism depends on the country’s political situation, an official from the department said.

Since October, flocks of tourists continue to enter Mandalay, mostly from China, France, Germany and the U.S, said U Soe Win, chair of Boat Association.

He went on to say that they usually visited significant destinations including the Golden Palace Monastery, Taungthaman Lake and U Bein Bridge, Mandalay Hill, Kuthodaw Pagoda, Atumashi Monastery, Kyauktawgyi Pagoda, Maha Muni Buddha Temple and so on.

“Some tour operators rented boats ahead of their tour plan. The rental fees for a boat per trip is Ks8,000,” U Soe Win added.

There are 168 hotels with 6,788 rooms in Mandalay. Among other sites, globetrotters mostly visit cultural zones of ancient Bagan, Inwa and Amarapura. International tourist arrivals for the year are estimated to reach over 400,000.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism predicts that the tourist arrivals in the country are likely to reach around 7.5 million by 2020, with plans to spend about US$500 million funds on tourism development until the target period.

The ministry targets at raising income obtained from tourism-related service businesses to over $10 billion in 2020 from $534 million in 2012.


The 72nd Myanmar Writers’ Day

>> From page 8

This year 2016, there were two awardees of “Life Long Literary Achievement” title which is awarded to Doenyn writers of 80 years and above.

Besides various private patrons and NGOs have set up their own literary organizations such as Pakokku U Ohn Pe Literary Award Fund, Myanmar Writers’ Association has contact and interaction with its counterparts abroad - China, Japan, South Korea, India, Singapore, London, America, Germany, France and UNESCO. Exchanges of visit for Literary Seminar do take place every year.
South Korea parliament introduces bill to impeach Park; vote due Friday

SEUL — South Korea's parliament introduced a bill on Thursday to impeach President Park Geun-hye, setting the stage for a historic vote to oust the embattled leader engulfed in an influence-peddling scandal.

Parliament is expected to vote on Friday in favour of impeachment, although the Constitutional Court must decide whether to uphold the motion, a process that could take up to 180 days.

Opposition parties have said they believe they will get the two-thirds majority needed to pass the bill, with support from about 30 members of Park's conservative Saenuri Party to secure the necessary 200 votes.

Park, 64, said this week she would await the court's ruling, signalling that the country's six-weeks-long ruling, signalling that the country's six-weeks-long political crisis is set to continue.

Park, the daughter of a former military ruler, is under intense pressure to resign immediately, with big crowds taking to the streets of the capital, Seoul, every Saturday calling for her ouster.

Her approval rating is at a record low of 4 per cent. ARealmeter poll released on Thursday said 78.2 per cent of respondents wanted Park to be impeached.

She would be the first democratically elected South Korean president not to serve a full five-year term. Former President Roh Moo-hyun was impeached by parliament in 2004, a motion that was overturned by the Constitutional Court which said grounds for impeachment were insufficient.

Park is accused of colluding with a friend and a former aide to pressure big businesses to donate to two foundations set up to back her policy initiatives.

She has denied wrongdoing but apologised for carelessness in her ties with friends, Choi Soon-sil.

An impeachment vote must be held within 72 hours of the motion's introduction, and the speaker of parliament, Chung Sye-kyun, asked for a vote on Friday. —Reuters

Lawmakers and members of opposition parties chant slogans during a rally demanding the impeachment of South Korean President Park Geun-hye at the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea, on 7 December 2016. The signs read 'Impeach Park Geun-hye immediately!'.

Pakistan mourns 47 killed in air crash, as investigators seek answers

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan on Thursday mourned the 47 victims of its deadliest plane crash in four years, among them a famed rockstar-turned-Muslim evangelist, two infants and three foreigners, as officials sought to pinpoint the cause of the disaster.

Engine trouble was initially believed responsible, but many questions remain, stirring new worries about the safety record of money-losing state carrier Pakistan International Airlines.

The ATR-42 aircraft involved in the crash had undergone regular maintenance, including an “A-check” certification in October, said airline chairman Muhammad Azam Saigol.

“I want to make it clear that it was a perfectly sound aircraft,” Saigol said.

The aircraft appeared to have suffered a failure in one of its two turboprop engines just before the crash, he added, but this would have to be confirmed by an investigation.

“I think there was no technical error or human error,” Saigol told a news conference late on Wednesday.

Outpourings of grief erupted online soon after flight PK661 smashed into the side of a mountain near the town of Havelian, some weeping quietly, others besieging officials with questions.

“What can I tell you?” said Raja Amir, as he waited for his mother’s remains. “I don’t know what we will get of her. There is still another hell to go through.”

Remains are being brought by helicopter to Islamabad, where DNA tests will be used to identify them, authorities said.

—Reuters
Nearly 150 patients evacuated from east Aleppo — ICRC

Geneva — Nearly 150 civilians, most disabled or in need of urgent medical care, were evacuated overnight from a hospital in Aleppo’s Old City, the first major evacuation from the eastern sector, the International Committee of the Red Cross said on Thursday.

They had been trapped there for days by nearby fighting and as the front line moved closer. Eleven patients had died from lack of medication or been killed in crossfire before ICRC and Syrian Arab Red Crescent teams could reach them, it said.

The head of the ICRC delegation in Syria, Marianne Gasser, who is in the city, said in a statement on the evacuees: “Many of them cannot move and need special attention and care.”

Of the evacuated disabled, mental health patients and wounded from Dar Al-Safaa hospital in the Old City late on Wednesday, 118 patients were taken to three hospitals in the government-controlled west of Aleppo.

Trauma and emergency cases were taken to Al-Razi surgical hospital and University Hospital, ICRC spokeswoman Krista Armstrong told Reuters, and Ibn Khaldoun hospital took the mental health and elderly patients, she said.

Thirty other men, women and children were taken to shelters, also in the west of the city, the ICRC statement said.

As heavy fighting continues in eastern Aleppo, the humanitarian situation is “known to be catastrophic”, the ICRC said. The agency called on all warring sides to allow a humanitarian pause to be able to deliver aid supplies in the besieged sector which has been inaccessible since April.

The Syrian army has gained control of all parts of the Old City, a war monitoring group said on Wednesday, part of an advance which has seen insurgents lose about two thirds of their main urban stronghold over the past two weeks.—Reuters

GENEVA — A total of 83,998 civilians have fled the Iraqi city of Mosul since military operations to reclaim one of the Islamic State (IS)’s last strongholds began in October, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said on Wednesday.

Up from 76,464 a week ago, figures from the organisation showed that almost 14,000 families have been displaced as a result of ongoing fighting in the northern city. According to statistics, 81 percent of those recently displaced by military operations are living in formal camps.

A further 13 percent have taken shelter in private settings, while four percent are in critical shelter arrangements and two percent are either passing through screening areas or in emergency sites.

Supported by Kurdish Peshmerga fighters, Iraqi troops began operations on 17 October to take back the city which fell into IS hands in June 2014 after government forces fled, enabling IS militants to take control of parts of Iraq’s northern and western regions. International aircraft as well as Iraqi and US-led coalition artillery units are supporting ground operations there. According to reports, more than 5,000 IS militants were initially holed up in Mosul.

The UN refugee agency had warned before the military campaign kicked off that as many as 1.2 million civilians could be displaced by the fighting.—Xinhua

Almost 84,000 displaced as fighting rages in Iraq’s Mosul

RAMALLAH/JERUSALEM — Israeli security forces shot and killed a Palestinian youth after he allegedly tried to stab them in West Bank on Thursday, the latest in a yearlong wave of violence.

The Palestinian Ministry of Health said in an emailed press release that it was informed that a Palestinian was killed after Israeli soldiers opened fire on him at an Israeli military checkpoint near Nablus city.

Israeli police spokeswoman Luba Samri said the suspect moved toward a group of border police, pulling out a knife; the police responded with gunfire, killing the man on the spot.

Governor of Nablus Akram Rajoub condemned the incident and told Xinhua that the Israeli army “targets Palestinian youth to kill them.” “We observe a systematic policy by the occupation army, giving clear directives to its soldiers to shoot to kill,” Rajoub said. “Otherwise we would not have seen that the result of each shooting is death.”

Two weeks ago, security guards shot dead another Palestinian youth after he allegedly pulled a knife at a guard in the Shuafat neighbourhood in East Jerusalem.

A wave of violence in the West Bank and Israel has claimed the lives of at least 235 Palestinians and 34 Israelis since September 2015.

Israel says that most of the Palestinians were killed while perpetrating or attempting to perpetrate stabbing, car-ramming, and shooting attacks.

The Palestinians and human rights organisations say that Israel is using excessive force to quell the uprising, and in many cases, kill Palestinians who could be stopped without using lethal force. Some of the casualties were mistaken to be attackers, according to Palestinian officials and rights groups. Israeli leaders accuse the Palestinian National Authority of “inacting the unrest, while the Palestinians say it is the result of nearly 50 years of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

More than 5 million Palestinians now live in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.—Xinhua

Israeli police report attempted stabbing in West Bank; alleged suspect shot dead

TOKYO — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Thursday it was in the interests of the United States to remain committed to a multilateral nuclear treaty.

The US Senate voted last week to extend the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA) for 10 years, and Iran vowed to retaliate, saying it violated last year’s agreement with six major powers to curb its nuclear program in return for the lifting of international financial sanctions.

A diplomatic thaw between the United States and Iran over the past two years appears in jeopardy with US President-elect Donald Trump taking office next month.

Trump said during his election campaign he would scrap the nuclear agreement, calling the pact “a disaster” and saying it could lead to a “nuclear holocaust”.

Zarif, in Japan as part of an Asian tour that included India and China, told a seminar in Tokyo that while the agreement was multilateral and endorsed by the UN Security Council, this did not mean it might not be violated by the United States, which he said had a “less than respectable” history in respecting international laws.

“I’m not basing our hope on an illusion that people will respect international law out of their goodwill or good nature,” he said.

“I believe it is in the interests of the United States as well as the rest of the international community to respect this multilateral agreement.”

Sanctions against Iran had not worked in the past and would accomplish nothing if strengthened, especially since the other treaty partners would be unlikely to buy into them, he said.

“Sanctions will harm us, but won’t break us,” he said.

Zarif said on Saturday the US vote to extend the ISA for 10 years showed it could not be relied on to act on its commitments.

US officials said the ISA renewal would not infringe on the nuclear agreement. US lawmakers have also said the ISA extension would make it easier for sanctions to be quickly reimposed if Iran contravened the nuclear deal.

But Iran’s nuclear energy chief, Ali Akbar Salehi, who played a central role in reaching the nuclear deal, described the extension as a “clear violation”, if implemented.—Reuters

Iranian minister says in US interest to stay committed to nuclear pact

An injured woman walks at a site hit by an airstrike in the rebel-held al-Ansari neighbourhood of Aleppo, Syria, on 7 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS

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Iranian minister says in US interest to stay committed to nuclear pact
Cuba wants to sign accords with US before Obama exit

HAVANA — Cuba said on Wednesday it hoped to sign off on at least half a dozen agreements with the United States before businessman Donald Trump, who has threatened to derail detente between the former Cold War foes, becomes president on 20 January. Cuban and US officials held talks in Havana to discuss what more could be accomplished during President Barack Obama’s remaining weeks in office, agreeing to arrange more high-level visits and technical meetings.

The more Cuba and the United States deepen their detente, the more irreversible it will become, analysts said.

“At the moment we are negotiating 12 more (accords) with the aim to be able to conclude and sign a majority of them,” Josefina Vidal, the Cuban foreign ministry’s director of US affairs, told a news conference.

The accords would be in areas such as seismology and meteorology, she said, adding that Cuba and the United States had already signed a dozen accords in the two years since they agreed to normalise relations, ending decades of hostility.

They have also opened embassies, restored commercial flights and opened travel options. But some fear all that is now at stake, given Republican Trump has said he would seek to reverse the opening unless Communist-ruled Cuba gives the United States what he calls a “better deal”. Vidal declined to comment on Trump’s statements but said she hoped his administration would recognise that the detente had the backing of most Cubans and Americans.

“Cuba would hope the new US government takes into account the results we have achieved... that are backed by the majority of the Cuban population (and) US citizens,” she said.

Cuba was willing to continue improving relations but “within the respect of the existing differences and without having to make any kind of concession to the principles in which Cuba firmly believes,” Vidal added.

In Washington on Wednesday, US lawmakers joined more than 100 Cuban entrepreneurs to urge Trump to continue the thaw.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration is pressing American companies to complete business deals in Cuba by then.

Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd and Norwegian Cruise Line said on Wednesday they had received approval from Cuba’s government to operate cruises to the island.

The number of US visitors to Cuba had jumped 68 per cent in the first ten months of this year to 208,000, Vidal said. — Reuters

PARIS imposes driving restrictions, plans clunker ban as smog hits highs

PARIS — The French capital Paris announced on Wednesday licence-plate based driving restrictions for a third day in a row and plans bans on old cars as the City of Light experienced the worst air pollution in a decade.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, Paris banned cars from circulation based on whether their license plates ended with odd or even numbers. It will now ban half of all traffic again on Thursday.

Other French cities such as Lyon are also planning bans as clouds of pollution hang over many European cities due to a lack of the winds that normally blow in off the Atlantic Ocean.

It is only the fourth time in 20 years that Paris has imposed such a ban and the first time it applies for consecutive days. Municipalities around Paris also imposed the ban.

With its famous Eiffel Tower shrouded in a grayish haze and some Asian tourists donning face masks, the city also made all public transport, residential parking and the Velib’ bicycle and Autolib’ electric car schemes free.

“Cars are poisoning the air. We need to take preventive measures,” said Paris city hall transport official Herve Levie.

Besides instant measures like license-plate based driving bans, the city also plans to step up its fight against chronic pollution by gradually banning the oldest and most polluting vehicles from the city center, he said.

“We want these bans to automatically take effect when the pollution exceeds a certain level, not have to negotiate them with the government each time,” Levie added.

From mid-January, Paris will become the first French city to launch the new “Crit’Air” vignette system that will require all cars to have a color-coded sticker indicating their age and pollution level. The stickers will allow police to control which vehicles can circulate in the city centre.

—Reuters
Solar Impulse founder sees electric passenger plane in 10 years

Geneva — The co-founder of a project that saw a solar-powered aircraft complete the first fuel-free flight around the world this year expects electric passenger planes to operate in just under 10 years.

Bertrand Piccard, who along with fellow pilot André Borschberg founded Solar Impulse, also shrugged off concerns that US President-elect Donald Trump’s appointment of a fossil fuel industry defender as his top environmental official could hamper global clean technology efforts.

Since completing their historic fuel-free flight in July, Piccard and Borschberg have been working on projects to show how the technologies used in their plane can be used in other applications.

Borschberg said they were especially interested in how the technology could be used to develop small electric planes with a flying time of about 1.5 hours. The two plan to announce their next project early next year, Borschberg said.

“In 9 years and 8 months, you’ll have 50 people traveling short-haul on electric planes,” Piccard, founder and chairman of Solar Impulse told an IATA airlines association briefing in Geneva.

“Why 9 years and eight months? Because since four months, I’ve been saying it will be ‘10 years’. It will happen,” he added.

Piccard said that it didn’t matter what people thought about climate change because clean tech was getting cheaper and would help to drive growth.

He cited examples of insulation making homes cheaper to live in, of LED lights reducing lighting costs.

“Five years ago everything that was clean tech was more expensive — that is not the case today. If the aim is to be profitable and create jobs, then coal is out of business,” he said. — Reuters

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### Invitation for Bids

**Date:** 9th December 2016  
**Loan Agreement No.:** MY-P4 dated 5th September, 2014  
**IFB No.:** MR/BID/104

1. The Government of Republic of the Union of Myanmar has received a loan from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) towards the cost of the Yangon-Mandalay Railway Improvement Project Phase I. It is intended that part of the proceeds of this loan will be applied to eligible payments under the contract for Package CP104: Rolling Stock.

2. Bidding will be conducted through procedures in accordance with the applicable Guidelines for Procurement under Japanese ODA Loans, and is open to all Bidders from eligible source countries, as defined in the Loan Agreement. The Eligible Nationality of the Bidders shall be Japan in the case of the prime contractor. In case where the prime contractor is a joint venture, such joint venture will be eligible provided that the nationality of the lead partner is Japan, that the nationality of the other partner is Japan and/or the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and that the total share of work of Japanese partners in the joint venture is more than fifty percent (50%) of the contract amount.

3. Myanma Railways, Ministry of Transport and Communications now invites sealed Bids from interested eligible Bidders for the design, execution and completion of Rolling Stock (Diesel Electric Multiple Unit) (“the Works”). International Competitive Bidding will be conducted in accordance with JICA’s Single-Stage Bidding Procedure.

4. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from and inspect the Bidding Documents at the head office of Myanma Railways at the address shown below, during office hour from 09:30 a.m. to 16:30 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Address: Tender Office, Myanma Railways Head Office, Nay Pyi Taw Railway Station Compound, PobbaThiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

**Telephone:** +95-67-77011  
**Facsimile number:** +95-67-77024

Electronic mail address: gmmne.rail@mrt.gov.mm, dgmplan.rail@mrt.gov.mm

5. A set of complete Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested eligible Bidders on the submission of a written application to the address above and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of United States Dollar one thousand (1,000 US$). Unless Bidder’s eligibility is confirmed the Employer will decline to provide any Bid information.

6. Bids must be delivered to the address above on or before 14:00 p.m on 9th March 2017 and must be accompanied by a bid security of Japanese Yen one hundred and twenty five million (JPY 125,000,000).

7. Technical Bids will be opened in the presence of prequalified Bidders’ representatives who choose to attend. The opening of Technical Bids will take place on 7th April 2017, at 14:00 p.m. at Myanma Railways Head Office Conference Room, Nay Pyi Taw.

8. If Bidder is only one, the Employer may consider returning his Bid unopened.

**Myanma Railways, Ministry of Transport and Communications**

Managing Director  
Nay Pyi Taw Railway Station Compound, PobbaThiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

**Telephone:** +95-67-77011  
**Facsimile number:** +95-67-77024

Electronic mail address: gmmne.rail@mrt.gov.mm, dgmplan.rail@mrt.gov.mm

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### Invitation for Prequalification

**Date:** 9th December 2016  
**Loan Agreement No.:** MY-P4 dated 5th September, 2014  
**IFB No.:** MR/PQ/104

1. The Government of Republic of the Union of Myanmar has received ODA Loan (Loan Agreement dated 5th September, 2014) from Japan International Cooperation Agency toward the cost of the Yangon-Mandalay Railway Improvement Project Phase I (hereinafter referred to as “the Project”). It is intended that part of the proceeds of this Loan will be applied to eligible payments under the contract resulting from the bidding for which this prequalification is conducted.

2. Myanma Railways, Ministry of Transport and Communications,(hereinafter referred to as “the Employer”) intends to prequalify suppliers and/or firms for the procurement of rolling stocks under the Project; namely the Package CP104; Rolling Stock (hereinafter referred to as “the Contract”).

Brief description of supply under the Contract:

- Numbers: 4 train sets of 6-car each (total 24 cars)
- Type of car: diesel electric multiple units (DEMU)
- Maximum operating speed: 100km per hour
- Place of delivery: Insein DRC Depot, 15km away from Yangon
- Purpose: operating on the Yangon Mandalay railway line

3. Invitation for Bids is made on the same date of the Invitation for Prequalification for the simultaneous process of Prequalification and Bids.

4. Prequalification will be conducted through procedures in accordance with the applicable Guidelines for Procurement under Japanese ODA Loans, and is open to all Applicants from eligible source countries, as defined in the Loan Agreement. The Eligible Nationality of the Applicants shall be Japan in the case of the prime contractor. In case where the prime contractor is a joint venture, such joint venture will be eligible provided that the nationality of the lead partner is Japan, that the nationality of the other partners is Japan and/or the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and that the total share of work of Japanese partners in the joint venture is more than fifty percent (50%) of the contract amount.

5. Interested eligible Applicants may obtain further information from and inspect the Prequalification Documents at Tender Office in the head office of Myanma Railways, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, during office hour from 09:30 a.m. to 16:30 p.m. Monday to Friday.

6. A complete set of the Prequalification Documents may be purchased by interested eligible Applicant(s) on the submission of a written Application to the address above and upon payment of non-refundable fee of United States Dollar One Hundred (US$ 100).

Unless eligibility of Applicant is confirmed the Employer will decline to provide any Prequalification information.

7. Applications for prequalification should be submitted in sealed envelopes, delivered to the address above by 14:00 p.m. 9th March 2017 and be clearly marked “Application to Prequalify for Yangon-Mandalay Railway Improvement Project Phase I: Package CP104: Rolling Stock."

8. If Applicant is only one, The Employer may consider returning the application unopened.

**Myanma Railways, Ministry of Transport and Communications**

Managing Director  
Nay Pyi Taw Railway Station Compound, PobbaThiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

**Telephone:** +95-67-77011
‘La La Land’ duo Emma Stone, Ryan Gosling cement mark in Hollywood

LOS ANGELES — Actors Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling left their literal mark in Hollywood on Wednesday as their hands and feet were imprinted in cement, in support of their most recent role playing lovers aspiring for success in the modern-day musical “La La Land.”

The two actors pressed their hands and feet into cement at the famed TCL Chinese Theater, where the ground is embedded with slabs of concrete bearing prints of hands and feet belonging to many of Hollywood’s biggest names, such as Marilyn Monroe, Tom Hanks and Meryl Streep.

Stone, 28, said she had visited the Chinese Theater when she moved to Hollywood at age 15, and found that her hands were “an exact match” for “Gentlemen Prefer Blondes” actress Jane Russell. “If you’re looking for a Jane Russell hand-double, I’m your girl,” she quipped.

“This is just an incredible experience and making this movie was an incredible experience, so what a place to get to experience, so what a place to get to be in a band,” says Thomson.

Gosling, 36, joked, “I’m still, I guess, not completely convinced that we’re not going to be arrested for vandalism, but I’m going to take your word for it that we’re allowed to do this.”

“La La Land,” about an aspiring actress and jazz musician falling in love while trying to succeed in Los Angeles, is considered an Oscar front-runner, with critics praising Stone and Gosling’s performances.

Johnny Depp, Will Smith, George Clooney on ‘overpaid’ Forbes list

NEW YORK — Johnny Depp and Will Smith topped a list on Wednesday of Hollywood’s most overpaid actors, an illustration that star power does not always bring in dollars at the movie box-office.

Fan favourite George Clooney also found himself on the annual Forbes list after the limited commercial appeal of films like “Hail Caesar,” “Money Monster” and the 2015 flop “Tomorrowland.”

Demp led the list for the second straight year after his movie “Alice Through The Looking Glass” brought in just $300 million at the global box-office after costing about $170 million to produce. Forbes compiles the list by comparing the estimated pay for a lead actor in his or her last three movies with the estimated production costs and box-office gross of those movies.

It calculated that Demp, whose 2015 movie “Mortdecai” also bombed, returned just $2.8 dollars at the box-office for every $1 he was paid.

Demp, 53, who became one of Hollywood’s highest paid actors with “Pirates of the Caribbean,” also had a bad 2016 on the personal front. His split from actress Amber Heard made headlines when the pair exchanged allegations of violence and blackmail that were later dropped, and Demp paid out $7 million in a divorce settlement.

“Concussion,” the 2015 film about football head injuries that starred Smith, grossed just $13 million more than its $34 million budget. It followed disappointing receptions for “Focus” and “After Earth” and led to a $5 return at the box-office for every $1 Smith was paid, Forbes calculated.

Clooney came in 5th on the list, with a box-office return of $6.70 for every $1 he was paid, largely because of the failure of “Tomorrowland” which cost $190 million to produce.

“Magic Mike” star Channing Tatum and comedian Will Ferrell rounded out the top 5 on Forbes list of most overpaid actors.

Pixies frontman is troubadour of alt-rock after 30-year career

LONDON — Pixies frontman Black Francis has been called many things in his time — sur- realist poet, alt-rock progenitor and singer in “one of Americ’s greatest bands ever,” that last one according to Bono of U2.

Sitting backstage at the O2 Academy in London’s Brixton before another sold-out gig, the singer tried on yet another label for size as he discusses what drives him 30 years into a career that many argue changed the face of music.

“What motivates (us)? ... It’s not about being inspired by something or being motivated by something. If you decide to become ... pardon the expression, a ‘troubadour’ then you become a troubadour, that’s who you are,” says the 51-year-old, also known as Charles Michael Kittridge Thompson IV.

“It’s not even like ‘Do you feel like doing it today?’ It’s just like — that’s what I do.”

The Pixies began with four albums and an EP in the late 80s and early 90s. They broke up, then after a few more serious bumps in the road, came back and kept going.

That first seven-year burst cut through the gloop of 80s pop with raw screaming vocals, loud-quiet dynamics and songs about lust, the bible and UFOs, among them “Debaser” and “Monkey Gone To Heaven”. Everyone from Nirvana to David Bowie queued up to pay homage.

The band split in 1993 as tensions boiled over between Thompson and bass player Kim Deal, then reformed to huge acclaim in 2004. Deal left again in 2013, leading to the Pixies’ third reincarnation, possibly their most challenging yet, as a band plunging on after an revolution it triggered had been absorbed into the mainstream.

It is a shift underlined half a dozen years ago with the band’s reunion, possibly their most challenging yet, as a band plunging on after an revolution it triggered had been absorbed into the mainstream.

Pixies guitarist Joey Santiago performs at the O2 Academy, Brixton in London, Britain, on 6 December 2016. PHOTO: REUTERS
Fashion designer Carolina Herrera receives Lincoln Centre honour

NEW YORK — Veteran designer Carolina Herrera spoke about the interconnectivity of fashion and art as she was honored by a New York arts organisation for her leadership and longevity in the fashion industry.

Herrera, 77, was presented with the Women’s Leadership Award by the Lincoln Centre Corporate Fund on Tuesday at a star-studded event at the Manhattan performing arts venue. Herrera said on the red carpet that the award “means a lot” coming from Lincoln Centre.

“Art always inspires fashion and fashion is art in movement,” she said.

The annual fundraising event picks a new honoree every year and supports 10 artist organisations on the Lincoln Centre campus.

Actresses Christina Ricci, Julianna Margulies and Emmy Rossum were among the guests at the event, which included a performance by Diana Ross and an exhibition of some of Herrera’s notable designs.

“She’s modern, she’s a New Yorker, she’s feminine, she’s classy, she’s sensual,” Rossum said. “She’s confident and smart and I think that that’s the way she makes you feel when you wear her clothes.”

Herrera, who was born in Venezuela, is celebrating the 35th anniversary of her New York-based eponymous fashion label, which has become a global billion-dollar brand.— Reuters

Prince Harry turns trader for charity day

LONDON — Prince Harry turned trader on Wednesday, taking calls alongside brokers at British inter-dealer ICAP for the company’s annual charity day.

Wearing a navy suit, the prince answered the phones alongside traders in fancy dress costumes for the charity day where all ICAP’s profits from 60 offices are donated to more than 200 charities worldwide.

ICAP, buyers and sellers of bonds, currencies and swaps, began recycling 30 per cent recycled gold, silver and bronze medals using only recycled materials.

“Because of the financial burden, no country can afford not to see recycling as a way of saving money, to be an object of admiration, to create excitement among Japanese and give the country an excuse to ramp up efforts to move toward a greener society ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics,” said Hironao Ito, a sophomore at Waseda University.

The 21-year-old Ito belongs to a university club known as Environment Rodrigues, a student-run body whose mission is to raise environmental awareness within the campus community.

The club, named after the lush tropical island in the Indian Ocean, was formed in 1997 and now has 50 members including Ito. Of the many projects the club is engaged in, Ito says none has attracted as much public interest as the “urban mine medal project”, a joint effort by Rodrigues and an academic society known as Ecomaterials Forum to create all three classes of Olympic medals using 100 per cent recycled metals.

“I understand it would be an object of admiration, but I don’t see why anyone would say no to the idea of electronic waste recycling,” Ito said in an interview with Kyodo News.

TOKYO — An old, used smartphone lying around the house just collecting dust might one day be an object of admiration, dancing proudly around in the form of an Olympic athlete’s neck at a medal podium ceremony.

Japanese mobile giant NTT DoCoMo Inc., which reclamed more than 3 million old mobile phones from subscribers annually, has also announced its plan to submit a cooperation proposal to the Games organisers and contribute to the nationwide movement.

Should Japan succeed in its advanced eco-friendly effort, it will become the first host country to offer Olympic medals containing 100 per cent recycled materials.

According to Ito, using e-waste to make bronze, or even silver, is not much of a challenge, but the step involved in recovering gold from recycled metal are very time-consuming and costly.

The Rio 2016 Organising Committee revealed the silver and bronze medals used in this summer’s Games were produced using 30 per cent recycled materials such as coins, mirrors and x-ray plates.

“Because of the financial burden, no country has been able to make gold medals using only recycled materials. It means a lot that Japan takes on this challenge, more so because Japan is not resource-rich,” he said.— Kyodo News
Sport

10th Waxing of Nadaw 1378 ME Friday, 9 December 2016

Unbeaten Thailand storm into AFF Suzuki Cup final

BANGKOK — Thailand will meet Indonesia in the final after putting on a devastating performance in the second half to defeat Myanmar 4-0 in the second leg.

After a nervy start, Thailand took the lead through Sarawut Masuk’s diving header in the 33rd minute. Myanmar had their chances as well, but failed to take one and they were made to pay in the second half.

A clumsy challenge from Yau Aung Kyaw gave Thailand a penalty which Theerathon Bunmathan converted, before Sergio Chatting and Chanathip Songkrasin wrapped up the win with a goal apiece eight minutes apart, for a huge 6-0 win on aggregate.

Goals
33’ (1-0) A teasing cross from Theerathon sets Sarawut up perfectly, and the latter’s diving bullet header finds the bottom corner of the net.
65’ (2-0) Sarawut earns a penalty after Yau Aung Kyaw made a poor high challenge. Up steps Theerathon, who sends the goalkeeper the wrong way.
75’ (3-0) Sarawut latches onto a superb ball from centre field by Charyl Chappuis, outmuscles his defender and beats Kyaw Zin Phyo at the near post with a viscous drive.
83’ (4-0) Excellent football from Thailand sees Sarawut and Chanathip exchange passes before the latter makes a cool finish into the bottom corner.

Match highlights
Thailand warming - Thailand could open Myanmar’s backline in the 10th minute and Teeradit Dangda has an opportunity, but the Thailand captain shies his shot despite being unmarked.

Close for Thailand - Teeradit’s corner is headed on by Teenawat, and Sarawut’s slight touch sends the ball crashing against the crossbar before it bounced away in the 26th minute.

Wasted opportunity for Myanmar - David Htan makes a superb run down the right before finding an unmarked Myo Ko Tun, who can only fire wide from eight yards out in the 35th minute.

Kawin to the rescue - Yau Aung Kyaw gets a great connection on his volley from the box and the ball looks to be dipping into the top corner until Kawin tips it over at full stretch.

Unlucky Myanmar - Kawin’s save is given acres of space inside the box and he fires a ferocious shot that cannonbs off the bar just two minutes after the restart.

Big stop from Kawin - Myanmar breaks past the static Thai backline again in the 61st minute, and this time Myo Ko Tun has a great chance but cannot find a way past Kawin, who made himself big.

Sarach’s effort stopped on the line - A moment of madness from Myanmar goalkeeper Kyaw Zin Phyo sees him go off his line and make a poor clearance. The ball falls for Sarach, whose shot is stopped by David Htun, the only defender protecting the open goal.

Aung Thu denied - Finding himself in the 85th minute, Aung Thu fantasy his chance with a low strike but Kawin reads it well. — AFF

Zidane ‘angry’ as Real surrender lead and top spot

MADRID — Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane criticised his players for switching off against Borussia Dortmund and throwing away a two-goal lead to cost the European champions top place in Champions League Group F on Wednesday. Just as in Dortmund in September, Real conceded a late goal to draw 2-2 with Thomas Tuchel’s side, although they still equalled a club record 39-game unbeaten run in all competitions.

Karim Benzema scored in each half to put Real in a comfortable position to win the game, but Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang responded and Marco Reus levelled in the 88th minute.

“When you see how the second half went you get a bit angry. We had the game in our hands but this is football. You need to carry on right until the end,” Zidane told a news conference.

“We created a lot of chances to score the third goal. Instead, we allowed Dortmund back into the game. Dortmund deserved first place. They demonstrated how strong they are.” Real failed to finish top of their group for the first time since 2012-13, when they also came second to Dortmund.

Finishing second could yet prove to be a blessing for Real, who will avoid fellow runners-up Bayern Munich and Paris St Germain as well as fellow Spaniards Atletico Madrid and Barcelona, but could meet Zidane’s former side Real Madrid in the semi-finals.

“I haven’t thought about the draw, I wanted us to finish top and we did everything to do that but I’m not going to keep going over it. We’ll see who we get on Monday,” the coach said.

“I don’t want to get Jeuvianus for two reasons, but there’s nothing we can do about that.” — Reuters